

The Manicure Girl

By
George Randolph Chester

(Copyright by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

"You don't have to ring 'em to tell all counterfeits," observed the Hotel Iveligh manicure girl as she opened a bundle of emery paper. "Only last week I had one in here that was so like an imitation you'd think he'd sit nights to make fun of himself; any way, you'd begin to understand how the Chadwick took up collections. He was old enough to have fed Meselah his fennel tea, but the help old man can get from ugliness, doctors and tailors that ought to do on taxidermists, makes anything show at the Hippodrome look like a college-cut clothes, I knew the ole play before the curtain went up, I wouldn't look in Billy's direction. He was already joshing more in was good for him. You know, he's the boss barber and wants to buy me a plain gold ring and a no-player, but poor Billy isn't a man his word. He promised he'd do anything in the world for me, and reneged the only request I made. He wouldn't change his face. Of course, the first thing Mr. Neville did when he knitted down into chair was to squeeze my hand. It was a terrible shock to me. I see, since it only happens from nine twenty times a day, and I hardly know what to do—only just how to p it. I shifted his hands into and of the ninety-eight-cent near-cut as bowl so often he fell to it that program had been changed with notice, and then he took the number. Billy snickered out loud, and I t a glare at him that ought to have unk him to the size of a one-eyed peanut; but it didn't. He only siled up and watched for more. He's regular cut-up, Billy is, and of course knew there was more coming. He past-due flirty boys get so cal to turn down that nothing short a brick makes a dent in them, and

He didn't. He was puncture proof, and when he got up to go he leaned over the table to me and said: "What do you think of a nice evening at the theater tonight, and maybe a bird and a bottle after?" "Fine!" I chirruped. "I like to read about it; but if you're hunting some poor but honest working girl of fatal beauty to share it you'd better hurry, for the hour is growing late. For me, not! I'm going to spend this evening with my own grandfather." "I hadn't supposed it could be done, but the red began to creep under his make-up, and then I felt a little bit sorry. It's wrong to hit a cripple, anyhow, and as he went out I sunshined at him just so I wouldn't feel like so much of a grouch myself. I thought I could take a chance on that much without putting out the 'Welcome' mat, but say! when I die, put on my tombstone, will you, 'She was a good gy-ur! but she couldn't learn.' "That very evening, as I passed out through the parlors, I saw my Meselah's uncle, about five years younger in his silk tie and open-faced vest, talking to a real poppy mother and daughter who wore enough happy harness to stock a new Tiffany's. The younger one was such a picture that I swung up close to see if it was hand painted or only a chromo, but that's once I had to send a wireless apology, for her complexion was put on from the inside and would stand scrubbing. She looked perfectly happy except for one thing; all she wanted was something interesting to happen. She was real willing to go right away from there to find it, too, but the other two had their chins on pivots and smiled continuously without pain. "Anyhow," I thought, "Father Time is now back in his own precinct and they'll take care of him if he gets to wandering in his mind." "The next morning, bright and early, before I even had my wraps off,

just sat as quiet as a half dozen raw and looked a hole in my pompadour till Billy hung up the receiver of the telephone and came over to me with: "Two-two wants you as soon as you can come." "I never in my life saw anybody light up the way that young fellow did. All at once he looked like Coney on opening night. "Two hundred and two!" he said. "Go right up to her. Don't mind me. I can wait." "I glanced up at him and he looked awfully good to your Aunt Bessie. His face had turned a little bit pink and his eyes had lost that far-away look in a hurry. "Her! Of course it was a Her in two-two! But from the way this young fellow acted I could tell that this was an extra special Her of the very best brand, the choice and pick of the whole Her flock so far as he was concerned. "It wouldn't take me but a little bit to get through with you," I said, keeping my smile for in the elevator. "No, I can wait," he insisted. "I'd rather wait. To tell you the truth, I want to see you after you come back down," and he stammered and stuttered like a young married man doing his wife's first shopping with girl clerks. Finally he blurted out: "Would you mind taking a little note up there for me?" "A note!" I said, putting on my toppest air. "I don't think the house would permit it. You can call a bell boy from here, and he'll take it up." "He fidgeted again, and the more he fidgeted and the redder he got the more I liked him. "You see, it's this way," he explained. "There's two ladies up there, and I want the younger one to get the note without the older one seeing it." Then he got so red I began to feel real motherly toward him. He reached in his pocket and pulled out a roll of bills big enough to stuff a Teddy bear. "Smother that, young man," I said. "Once in a while I like to do a personal favor just to jolly myself along that me heart's in the right place. I tell you what you do. You scratch off your note and give it to me, and I'll think about what I ought to do on the way up. I'll be gone from three-quarters of an hour to an hour. Will you be here?" "Would he! If I felt as certain of going to heaven as I was that this young man would be right there when I got back, I'd never worry about my conduct as long as I live. "My! I do love to see a plot thicken, and when I got up to two-two you couldn't scratch this one with an installment solitaire; for there was the girl with the complexion that wouldn't come off, and she was prettier in a kimono than she had been in her grand opera stunner! Her mother was there, too, and when I came in they were in a gab-fest up to their pompadours, and blowing and pawing for shore so hard they never noticed me but went right on. Anyhow, you're supposed to wear blinkers and ear cotton around a hotel, so I went dead and got busy. The girl stopped long enough to give me a real human smile as she gave me her nails to do, and then she said: "But, mother, just think! Mr. Passay is older than father would have been at this time!" "Mr. Passay is young in everything but years," her mother came back, in that dead level tone of voice the hard-hearted father uses in the Bowers thrillers. "He is reaping the reward, in his splendid preservation, of a clean, Christian life. He is a gentleman, he is wealthy, and can give you social position. Why, child, he is the leading member of the famous Passay family, first cousin to the Vander-cashes, connected by marriage with the Whittefers. He's devoted to you, and all his daughters are grown up and out of the way." "Yes, and they'd all take great pleasure in calling me mother!" objected the girl. "They wouldn't dare show their faces near yours when they said it," snapped her mother; "besides you could stand that for a few years." "That's the trouble," said the girl. "He'd never die. He's proved that already. I won't have him, mother, and that settles it!" "You're an ungrateful child, Grace!" wailed the mother. "You'd rather have that young adventurer that I forbade to bother us any more. You have no proper pride at all." "Adventurer!" said Grace, and I liked the way her eyes snapped. "Mr. Hardy has a fifty-thousand dollar ranch, and a nice little house in a nice little city near by, and money in the bank. And he made it all himself. His social position is good enough for me. It's better than father's was when you married." "Well, the old lady began to drip at the eyes right away. Her daughter was ungrateful—again. She had no proper pride—again. She was forgetting a solemn obligation. Her father on his very deathbed had told Grace to mind her mother, and what was she doing now? And the old lady retired to the bath room for first aid to the weepers, scared purple for fear her eyes would show red at lunch. "By that time your Aunt Bessie had her mind made up good and plenty what to do. "This Mr. Hardy," I guessed, putting a dab of rouge on the prettiest little finger nail I ever saw. "If he's a young man with two shoulders and several white teeth, I think he's down in the barber shop right this minute, spoiling his finger nails, waiting till I come back. See if his name's on this," and I slipped her the note. "Say, she lit up like a Belasco sunrise! "I didn't know he was here," she said, but it wasn't to me she said it,

and she just fairly ate that note with-out salt or pepper. "You may tell Mr. Hardy that I cannot write a note just now," she said, "but to please send up his card to mother and me right after lunch-oon. I'll see that he's received." "You'll win," I told her. "I've got a bet on you." "When I told Hardy the stunt that was cut out for him he turned the color of his collar and got perfectly limp. "Cheer up," I said. "The returns are not all in yet, and if there's any way your Aunt Bessie can help stuff the ballot boxes, all her other engagements are off." "That night he was waiting to walk out to the car with me, and beaming like a custard pie. He simply had to rectify it all to somebody, and I was the only audience he could call. "I saw her," he said, "and I'm to see her once more, though I guess

head spin, and by the way Billy frowned I knew I'd done a perfectly scrumptious job on grandpa. After he had his morning face put on, of course he came toddling right over to me, and my, but I was the giddy young thing! It only cost me two glances and another smile to have a theater invitation for that night, and at 5 o'clock I hiked home and put on all my kill'em-deads from the the plumes down. "When Uncle Antique saw me in the uniform I felt sorry for his respectable family, but I will say he knew how to do the honors, and the way he tucked me into my seat you'd have thought I was the queen of Sheba. "I enjoyed the show while I was there, too—everything in this world looks so good to me nowadays that I could almost enjoy the toothache—but just before the all-get-bush chorus at the end I got real peevish and made

thread about me that hadn't been pulled out she saw through to it. If I'd been innocent I'd have shivered up under that searchlight, but I wasn't. I was perfectly wicked and proud of it, and having the time of my life. So was grandpa. I let him wobble on and on, getting farther and farther away from an alibi all the time, with Mr. Hardy and his Grace all but stuffing napkins into their mouths to keep from screaming. Grandpa got more kittenish every minute. He didn't notice any more whether I was drinking or not, and every glass of the foolish water he took made the lights turn rosier, until at last he got too confederate and then I arose in offended dignity.

"Sir," said I, "with you at your age I thought I should be sufficiently chaperoned, but as it is I must go home alone! Good evening."

"I paused just at the end of the other table to say that 'Good evening,' and of course the long-lost old man turned around to look at me. Instead, he found himself looking square into the blazing eyes of mother, and the curtain was down. The last I saw as Frank sent our waiter over to him with the check, was grandpa huddled in his chair, blinking his eyes and trying to figure out what had hit him.

"Maybe they wasn't the grateful ones, young Hardy and his girl. They made me come to the wedding, and mother was quite chocolate cream. She recognized me as the poor, embarrassed girl at Churley's, but not as the manicure girl of the Belveigh, and she seemed quite anxious about my family.

"Williams?" she repeated, as she shook my hand. "Williams? Are you by any chance connected with the Williamses of Narragansett?"

"No; the Williamses of Park Row," I said, and the dear old soul was perfectly satisfied. She didn't know New York, nor the names on the lamp-posts down Bowers way, and Park Row sounded real aristocratic to her, I guess."

GOOD JOKE ON POLITICIANS

French Senators and Deputies Accepted Invitations to Attend Centenary of Bogus Author.

Life is often stranger than fiction, but that a hoax should be pulled off in cultured and brilliant Paris that surpasses the ingenious fancy of the clerical playwright who wrote the delightful anglo-irish farce, "General John Regan"—a play in which, thanks to an American joker, a monument is erected in an isolated Irish town to a military and political hero who never existed—is a matter for some surprise. A French newspaper that had doubtless heard of the Irish farce tried the idea on members of the present parliament. It sent a letter to senators and deputies in the name of a "committee" and invited their participation in the grand celebration of the centenary of the "famous author, Hegesippe Simon," a specimen of whose profound and winged phrases was given on the note paper. The striking thought was, "When the sun rises, darkness vanishes." The "committee" offered to furnish material for appropriate addresses in the memory of the great man. This was enough—more than enough.

Fifteen senators and nine deputies—among them ex-cabinet ministers—swallowed the bait. They were so flattered by the invitation that they promptly accepted, omitting to look into works of reference. Some added tributes to the great thinker and regretted contemporary neglect of him. The paper promptly gave away the hoax, and France is laughing at the humiliated politicians. The moral of the affair is too plain to need pointing out. It is safe to say that politicians who hear of the incident will add some biographical literature to their libraries or use more care in the selection of secretaries.

Indian Ghost Story.

Several years ago I had a studio in Albuquerque, N. M., and the walls of my reception rooms and office were hung with large photographs of Indians. Karl Moore writes in Leslie's. One day I was visited by six men of the Navajo tribe, who, after much smoking and visiting, made known the real cause of their call. Directly over my desk was a framed portrait of one of the old medicine men of their tribe, who had just died. Believing that a part of his soul was imprisoned in the portrait—else how could it look so like him?—they asked me if I would not destroy it, so that his spirit might be released and be at peace. I immediately took the print from the frame and tore it into bits while the men looked on with silent approval. After thanking me they each shook hands in turn and fled quietly out of the room. They did not suspect that there might still be in existence other copies of the picture or a negative.

Real Drug.

Rutger Jewett, the New York literateur, gave a luncheon the other day at the Players' club in Germany park and during the game course a club attendant brought to one of Mr. Jewett's literary guests a long, ominous-looking envelope.

At sight of this envelope, so familiar to all literateurs, a shout of laughter went up.

The object of the laughter blushed, and thrust the envelope hurriedly into his inside coat pocket.

"It's only an elegy, boys," he said, "that the editor of Scribblers has turned down."

Mr. Jewett shook his head.

"How true it is," he said, "that poetry is on the decline."



When Uncle Antique Saw Me in This Uniform, I Felt Sorry for His Respectable Family.

ty soon I saw him watching my and my eyes, and I got ready. "Do you know," said he, "you look just like Maxine Elliott?" "Of course I know it," I handed him a. "Maxine comes in here nearly every day and asks me to quit it, but not."

That made him pause for the cross-anything, and I got three minutes her on the way.

What a lonesome city this is!" he in next, and I knew it was no trying to save him a chill. He didn't be satisfied till he got froze

Why did you slip away from him?" I asked.

From—he began, and then he ped. He wasn't so slow after all. I been going to ask 'from whom,' he had a flash of second sight and w I'd hint that it was either his rdian or his keeper.

What a cross little dear you are!" said, and patted my hand.

Just see what I have to put up with, though," I explained, and then I ed him one under the thumb nail set him jumping all over. That was for the 'little dear.'

Wouldn't you think he'd guess his had been disconnected after that?

who should come prancing into the barber shop but my Mr. Sear-and-yellow to have his face ironed, and with a nerve tall enough to make the Singler building look like a hitching post he lifted the roof of his toupee to me and smiled as pleasantly as a mummy that had died dippy. I escaped him when he went out, though, because I was busy with one of the worst kind—a merchant from Darkest Indiana who had come to New York to buy last year's latest style, and who was explaining how much he missed his wife so I would go to the theater with him and let him tell me about her.

"It helped some that afternoon to have a real one drop in. He was a tall, living-picture built young man, and looked so solid he could have had his clothes pressed right on him without hurting. His hands were not a bit pretty; they were better than that; they were good to look at. They were a man's hands, big and strong and brown, but well shaped enough, too; the kind that can hold a high stepper down to an even trot through ten miles of fireworks. It was a nice, firm, warm hand, but it didn't know I held it, and that interested me right away. You know, I suppose I'm like other girls. It makes me mad if they do, and I'm disappointed if they don't. He



"I Was Perfectly Wicked and Proud of It."

that will be about all; at least that's what I was given to understand, and rather plainly. There's no chance for me."

"Don't tear up your ticket before the bell rings," I told him. "Everything comes out in the wash, for while there's life there's soap. When does this dying interview come off?"

"Tomorrow night," he said. "I'm to take them to the theater."

"That's when I decided to wedge in. I can't keep out of it. It all comes from my East side bringing up, where, whenever there was a midnight fight, every man in the block yelled out of the window for them to wait till he got his shoes on. If there was anything doing we all wanted to be in it, and I suppose I'll be tickled to death with my own funeral, just because I'll be there and have the best part in the cast. I had a fine plot, standing right where I was, too. I get 'em often that way. Ain't I the little Bessie Bright?"

"Tell you what you do," I said. "After the theater you bring your crowd over to Churley's for a bite of supper, and I'll get up a little play for you that'll beat any show on Broadway. Don't get there too quick. Mosey out of the theater slow, and be sure you're the last ones out. Go back to your seat for something to kill more time. When you get into Churley's I'll have a table saved for you. That's all you have to do except sit with your back to me."

"Of course he was crazy to know what was coming off, but I wouldn't tell him. I wasn't quite sure myself, yet, but the next morning I was, for my posse Mr. Passay waltzes in as usual to have his wrinkles pressed out, and the smile I gave him would have melted this whetstone brick ice cream that they put up for picnics. He was so tickled I thought he'd do a